



News Release

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Cowlitz County water system owner faces stiff state fine

OLYMPIA – The owner of the Columbia Crest Estates water system in Cowlitz County has been fined \$21,060 for violating state health orders to properly maintain the water system and to address ongoing problems with arsenic.

Columbia Crest customers have been under a boil-water advisory since June 2 because owner Dan Class hasn't monitored water quality and doesn't have a certified operator to run the system, as the state requires. The state Department of Health issued the penalty after the failure of attempts to work with Class to address multiple system problems.

The agency's Office of Drinking Water inspected the system in July and found numerous sanitary issues, including mold, algae, and rodent infestations in buildings housing pumps, wells, and storage tanks. In addition, significant leaks pose a contamination risk.

The system serves 22 homes in an unincorporated area between Kalama and Woodland. The Department of Health has reclassified the system's operating permit as "red," which means the system is inadequate. This can affect decisions by local building officials and financial institutions about properties served by this water system.

Class did not comply with state health orders to:

- Hire a professional engineer and submit construction documents for an arsenic removal system to the Department of Health by May 15.
- Hire a certified water system operator by July 13 to run and maintain the system.
- Employ a professional engineer by July 20 to prepare a formal water system plan. These state-mandated plans require owners to demonstrate their technical, managerial and financial ability to maintain a safe and reliable water system.

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“He has been given every chance to meet requirements designed to protect the health of his customers,” said Clark Halvorson, manager of Southwest operations for the Office of Drinking Water. “We would much rather work cooperatively with water system operators and owners. Unfortunately, in this situation we’ve had to resort to a fine.”

Class has 28 days to appeal the penalty to the agency’s Adjudicative Service Unit.

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